

Business Standard

Company secretaries' apex body ICSI is offering training programmes to its women members to help them take up board roles, as part of larger efforts to bring in more diversity in the boardrooms.

"Training sessions are being conducted on a continuous basis for the students who are fit to become a part of the board. Besides, we are specially focusing on women and devoting one or two training sessions particularly for them as they have special need," ICSI President Mamta Binani said.

She was speaking to reporters here today on the sidelines of a conference on 'board diversity' organised by the Institute of Company Secretaries of [India](#) (ICSI).

Binani said the training sessions are conducted both online and offline so that the students can access it whenever they need.

"Women have to shed the fear factor in them. They have several things in mind but all those are very initial fears and one meeting takes all those things away," she added.

All listed firms in India are required to have at least one woman director on board from April 1, 2015, as per markets regulator Sebi's directive as also under the Companies Act, 2013, which is aimed at bringing about gender diversity in boardrooms.

Speaking at the same event, Lok Sabha MP Meenakshi Lekhi said, "I believe one's gender should not decide the position but competence should. Boardrooms should be gender neutral. Biases exist both in the boardrooms and politics. Women should be judged in terms of their intellect and strategy building skills."

"More acceptance and acceptability is what is needed and certain things which were not part of policy formulations should become a part of it as the focus should be how we support working women," she added.

When asked if the government is working on any such policies, she answered in the affirmative.

As on March 31, 2016, out of 5,451 companies listed on BSE, 1,375 have failed to comply with the rule and have been fined, government data showed. The corresponding figure on NSE is 191.